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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PESHAWAR 000141

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KISL PTER KDEM PK

SUBJECT: NWFP PML-Q CHIEF PROPOSES A STRATEGY FOR WAZIRSTAN

REF: A) PESHAWAR 99; B) PESHAWAR 122

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

(C) 1. Summary. Amir Muqam, the PML-Q's party chief in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), told us the GOP strategy in Waziristan is fragmented and badly requires new leadership to reinvigorate policy. He suggested a three-step approach to address the problem: 1) a strong new governor with overarching authority over the Army in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA); 2) the development of a comprehensive, coherent economic and political approach; and 3) a "back to the Raj" strategy of strengthening the Political Agents (PAs). Muqam contended the MMA is playing a double game by offering to negotiate on behalf of the Waziristan militants with the GOP while quietly encouraging extremist elements. End summary.

New Approach Needed in the FATA

(C) 2. Muqam, the Federal State Minister for Water and Electricity, criticized the current GOP FATA strategy as fragmented, saying there was an urgent need for new leadership to reinvigorate policy. The PML-Q chief proposed a three-step solution:

-- replacing current Governor Khalilur Rehman with a strong new leader;
-- developing a comprehensive, coherent economic and political plan;
-- fielding stronger Political Agents.

(C) 3. Muqam explained that FATA reform has to include political and economic elements. He approved of Minister of Industries Jehangir Tareen Khan's new economic initiative, but insisted political change must accompany economic proposals. Most important is the need for a strong new governor with overarching authority over the Army. "Command should be under one person," asserted Muqam. He also recommended a stronger FATA Advisor (he suggested former Chief Secretary Sahibzada Imtiaz) to strengthen the governor's overall political control of the region. Muqam insisted the new governor must be Pashtun and a "political figure" -- not someone with a military background. He offered no new names for governor, but rejected as inappropriate all the

favorites rumored to replace Governor Rehman (Ref A).

(C) 4. Muqam rejected the need for rapid political reform in the FATA, instead advocating for stronger PAs. He argued the old British system was still effective and the best way to govern the FATA. Weak Political Agents undermined the system, allowing the militants to flourish. He acknowledged that provincial assembly representation and political party activity are possible -- but not in the near term, given the region's social instability and lack of political experience. Replying to a question, he conceded that unofficial, informal party contacts in the FATA should be permitted as long as they are not publicly announced. Muqam also did not favor non-governmental organization (NGO) activity in the FATA at this time, chiefly because of a potential clash between the tribals' conservative, traditional value system and the secular or non-Islamist values of many NGO's.

The MMA's Double Game

(C) 5. Muqam criticized the MMA for playing a double game, offering to negotiate on behalf of the Waziristan militants with the GOP, while quietly encouraging the extremists (Ref B). He noted that NWFP Chief Minister Akram Khan Durrani recently offered "displaced people" from North Waziristan land in Bannu and Tank regions. Muqam felt this offer encouraged the extremist militants (he referred to them as "Pakistani Taliban") to move into the settled areas.

(C) 6. The PML-Q chief supported military force against the extremists but only under the sponsorship of political civil authorities who can hold out a meaningful prospect for cooperation with tribals -- rather than alienating them, as he

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feels the Army tends to do -- and extend a real chance for redress, if problems emerge.

Comment

(C) 7. Muqam did not appear to be angling for Governor Rehman's job. He claimed he was not "fit" and strongly preferred to retain his elected position rather than move to an appointive position. Unfortunately, he could not identify any candidate to replace Rehman, although it is an open secret that Rehman is not proving to be decisive or dynamic enough for the job (Ref A).

(C) 8. Two main camps have recently emerged on the issue of Waziristan policy. One goes "back to the past," opting for a stronger governor and PAs that can bind together President Musharraf's three pronged strategy -- military force, economic development, and political initiatives -- into one coherent approach. The other camp moves "forward to the future," arguing the PA system can neither be resuscitated in light of its past corrupt and inefficient practices nor the Army side-lined since it is the most powerful actor able to address growing extremist problems in Waziristan. Muqam belongs in the "back to the past" camp because he believes all current actors lack legitimacy in the eyes of the tribals to determine social justice or equity. Accordingly, he opts for a strong governor and a new FATA advisor who would put much more effective Political Agents into Waziristan. Strong civil authority is key, in Muqam's mind, to regulate military force; manage economic initiatives; serve as a credible arbiter, when necessary; and thereby win the hearts and minds of the local population. End comment.

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